



Hamden Alliance for Trees
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RE RB 5116 AN ACT REQUIRING THE CREATION OF UTILITY COMPANY TREE PLANTING FUNDS

Chairman Needleman
Chairman Arconti
Vice-chair Winfield
Vice-chair Allie-Brennan
Ranking Member Formica
Ranking Member Ferraro
Members of the Energy and Technology Committee:

We strongly support the intention of RB 5116. Taking action to protect Connecticut's natural environment is essential to protecting the reliability of our electric power systems. Without the environmental benefits trees bring our neighborhoods, efforts to protect the physical dimensions of the power grid will face ever increasing challenges. Of course some pruning and even removal is necessary. That means replacement is necessary. 5116 offers a significant step in the right direction.

We do wonder if 5116 may yet need some adjustment.

- If trees are only to be planted on public lands and never under overhead wiring, one may imagine that in a few years we could run out of places for planting that are both desirable and acceptable.
- Not planting under distribution wiring significantly restricts the possible locations. Right tree, right place would seem a better answer, at least in some communities. As drafted, Section (e) may be too restrictive.
- Public lands should be a priority, but studies have found that trees in backyards often survive longer and provide more effective pathways for wildlife.¹ Insufficient public land should not preclude placing trees in areas and neighborhoods that desperately need their many benefits.
- Much vegetation management happens in urban areas. In consequence urban areas often are in greatest need of replanting. So replanting projects will be most beneficial if they have the flexibility to plant where trees are most needed.

A further consideration: while it is important that the benefits of this proposed legislation be widely distributed around Connecticut, utility tree work is often concentrated in certain areas at certain times. It may be better, therefore, to allow for more concentrated replanting projects in

1 <https://vimeo.com/671201684>

areas most altered. Would something like a five year window for balancing the distribution of planting programs work?

Replanting is an essential part of our efforts to protect our environment. 5116 is a constructive approach. Its benefits, however, will depend on its implementation. As drafted, implementation largely seems to be left to the utilities whose expertise in this area may be limited.

There is much that may be learned from professional foresters and especially from those who specialize in urban forestry. How will we know if the good intent of 5116 is being achieved? Dr. Cecil Konijnendijk is a Professor of Urban Forestry at the University of British Columbia who consults globally. He's recommending a 3-30-300 rule². By that standard, one should see at least 3 trees from one's window. We all should live in an area with 30% tree canopy cover and within a 300 meter (five to ten minute) walk from a wooded area. By such a standard some parts of Connecticut are in much greater need than others. How might professional expertise best be engaged in the replanting effort?

All trees provide benefits by capturing carbon and helping with the climate crisis. Small, new trees, however, are of less benefit than the large established ones they replace. With proper placement, trees are more effective at cooling summer temperatures and reducing flooding by capturing rain water. Trees native to Connecticut provide a greater ecological benefit than non-natives. For new trees to prosper, and for people to benefit from their planting, they must be welcomed by the towns and the adjacent property owners, by the tree wardens and the local people who will need to take care of them. How will tree selection and placement be managed? Some of these issues may need to be addressed in legislation. Others may best be left to local discretion, perhaps with guidance from DEEP. Developing good answers will greatly improve the outcome of 5116. Let's move it forward.

Thank you for your many hours of work to make Connecticut a better place to live and work.

Sincerely,
Diane Hoffman
Ralph Jones
Phil Cronan
Henry Dynia
Elizabeth Langhorne
Melinda Tuhus
for the Hamden Alliance for Trees Steering Committee

2 <https://vimeo.com/676056689>